Tonight, at a junkyard on the outskirts of town, a certain someone was killed.

The stories of "Four Prologues" recount the hours leading up to the event through the eyes of the four people who were there when it all went down.

Sissel | Lynne | Jeego | ??? (Ray)

## Sissel

Bang!

My vision faded to black at that sound.

A sound that echoed throughout the junkyard.

It was... a sound I'd heard before.
Like something from the TV.

A gunshot... Yes, that's it.
The sound of someone dying

Just as it was fading from my mind, my body was wracked by an intense pain.

And that...

That was the moment I realized:

I was the one who was dying.

Suddenly...

A strong, horrible scent stabbed at my nose.
It wasn't the smell of garbage, it was something else entirely -- something I'd never smelled before.

Wait, no.

I did recognize it.

Long, long ago...

I'd smelled it just once, when I was still young.

A familiar... and foreboding smell...

.....

And then...

I heard the sound of the curtain falling on my story.

To be continued...

**Lynne**

When did it get so late?

Maybe if I leave the precinct right now and really floor it, I can still make it in time?
Yeah, I'll be fine. I'm a detective, after all.

Oh, who's that coming this way?
It's the Chief of the Special Investigation Unit!

"Looks like you're all ready to go."

"H-Hey, Chief...! What's up?"

"What do you mean, 'What's up?' Don't tell me you forgot."

Drat!
That's exactly what's happened.

I was promoted to detective recently -- just this past autumn, in fact.
And instead of some stuffy speech to mark the occasion, I said we should go for dinner sometime... I think.

"I'm so sorry! I... kinda have somewhere to be."

"Now? And where exactly are you going at this time of night, eh?"

"Umm, uh..."

Look, I'm not some bad guy who can lie convincingly on the spot.
I'm a detective, after all!

"Th-The junkyard on the outskirts of town."

"The junkyard? You going there to throw something out?"

"Not... exactly."

"Then you're going there to pick something up?"

"....."

Help. I don't know how to respond to that.
Because that's technically what I'm planning to do... sorta.

The Chief's face clouded over in annoyance.

"I don't believe this. Are you saying garbage is more important than me?"

"No, that's not it at all..."

"Besides, you're the one who picked tonight in the first place."

Ah, I did, didn't I?

...Oh, well.

Guess I don't have a choice. I'll just have to go eat with the Chief.

And when I do...

I'll have to find the right moment to knock him completely unconscious.

Or would that be going too far?

Definitely not. The Chief would understand.
This is an emergency. No one would ever blame me...
Or is that only wishful thinking?

"...You're right."

"Thank you."

"Give me a second, though."

...To find the weapon that will hurt the least.

Just then...

"Ah, darn it!"

"Chief?"

"Sorry, but I'm going to have to reschedule."

"Huh?"

Well, that was unexpected.
...As if this whole conversation we're having isn't already that.

"I just remembered my wife asked me to take out the trash."

"I-I see..."

"Before she gets home, I mean."

"U-Understood, Chief! Loud and clear!"

I give him a salute as he leaves.

After all of that...

I guess trash turned out to be more important than dinner for both of us.

At least, that's what I'm gonna tell myself.

In any case, I'm glad that's settled.

Because I absolutely, positively have to be at the Zone D Waste Center tonight.

[Zone D Waste Center]

I'm running out of time, and the bad feeling I have is only getting worse.

If I don't hurry...

To be continued...

**Jeego**

The bartender places a glass in front of me.

"Your Salty Dog."

The world... is an ugly mess.
It's full of things best ignored or overlooked.
That's why I engage in this small act of resistance:

I will never get a pair of glasses.
And I will certainly never wear one.

The world... is an ugly mess.
And if you're not wearing glasses, there's a lot you don't have to see.
My colleagues call me "Nearsighted Jeego."
Not that I mind.
I have no problem with it.

But also...

That's why the world... is an ugly, blurry mess.

The bartender places a glass in front of me.

"Your dry martini."

I look over at the musical instrument case on the stool next to me.
Inside it, my little golden friend is fast asleep.
The job tonight... is at a junkyard on the outskirts of town.
Pros go where the work is, no matter how smelly.

My heart rate increases steadily.

It's just about time.

I lift one hand ever so slightly and signal to the bartender.
He nods, just as slightly.
No words wasted.

I like this place. Think I'll drop in on my way home.

The bartender places a slip of paper in front of me.

"Your check."

I look at the bill.

.....

It's so blurry I can't read it.

"How much is it?"

...Seems I've run up quite the tab.
That's what I get for ordering without being able to see the prices.

Life can be a real pain when the world is an ugly, blurry mess.

...Alright.

I'll get some glasses.

As soon as I finish this job... I'm going to get myself a pair.

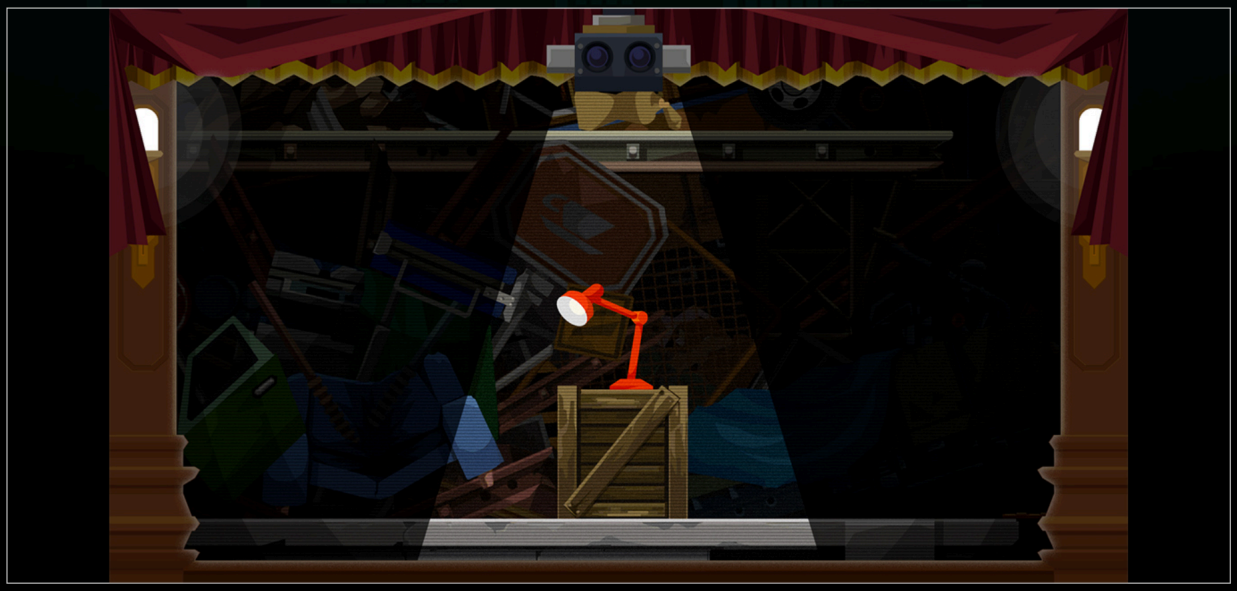
The thought flashes through my mind.

I grab the case beside me and leave the establishment.

Time for work, and for the curtain to rise.

To be continued...

**??? (Ray)**



It's been a long, long time, yes.
A long time to be all alone.
You could say, I'm an existence that doesn't exist in the real world.

Now, in my twilight years...
Well, I don't have much -- not even fond memories to look back on, really.
All I know is an absolute... and desperate...
Loneliness.
That is all.

Still...

The front curtain of night will be lowered before this mountain of trash soon.
The stage is set, the start of our story is near.
You can almost make out the first strains of the overture in the distance.

...And there it is.

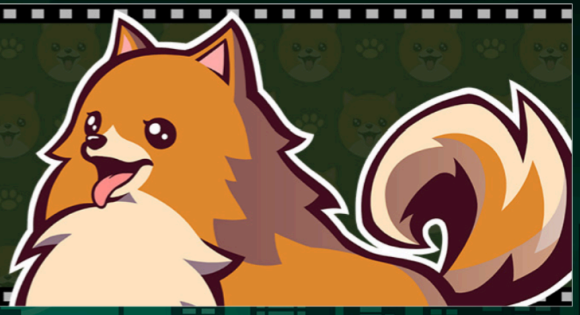
Bang!

It's finally time.

Act I has begun.

To be continued...

# Meeting Missile



Sissel: So Missile, you've really been the star of the show lately.

Lynne: Mr. Popular! Just don't let it go to your head.

Missile: Don't worry! As long as I have Miss Kamila and you, Miss Lynne, you're all I'll ever need!

Lynne: Well, you've certainly been living up to your name, Missile. Ever since the day we met.

Sissel: How did you end up living with this critter anyway, Lynne?

Missile: "Critter"? What's that supposed to mean?!

Lynne: Hmm, let's see... I met this little guy... maybe two years ago now? At Pet Shop Bocci.

Missile: I remember! I'd just been born and was only a tiny ball of fluff back then -- I didn't even know my left paw from my right.

Lynne: As for me, I'd just joined the police force. My life had totally changed... and I needed a friend.

Sissel: A friend?

Lynne: Yeah, for Kamila. I was going to be pulling a lot of late nights, and I thought she might get lonely.

Sissel: Ah, so that's why you decided to get the little doggie.

Lynne: Um, no... not exactly.

Sissel: Eh?

Lynne: I actually went to look at the birds. They're so small and their voices are so sweet.

Missile: Birds are for the birds. Look away for one second and they'll fly right off.

Lynne: Fish would've been nice, too. Pretty little tropical fish swimming around in a big aquarium.

Missile: Forget about fish. No matter how beautiful they are, you'll get sick of looking at them eventually.

Sissel: Careful there, Missile. Your approval rating is tanking.

Lynne: In any case, I was convinced a dog was a terrible idea. I wasn't going to be home much, and they have a lot of needs, right?

Missile: But think about it! Even when I did bite the hand that feeds me, it brought us closer together!

Lynne: That's easy for you to say... Anyway, I completely skipped over all the dogs in the store, as I recall.

Sissel: So then... how? How did you end up with this hooligan?

Lynne: Kamila fell for him -- hard. This little guy was in his cage, staring at us through its bars with this pitiful look on his face and tears in his eyes.

Missile: In my defense, I was a bit desperate.

Lynne: The lady at the shop took him out of the cage, and then...

Sissel: And then...?

Lynne: He suddenly jumped up on my coat, sunk his teeth into the badge on my chest, and tore it off.

Sissel: What the...?

Missile: Back then, I loved pulling off buttons, and I'd never seen such a big button before... So I went for it!

Lynne: That wasn't a button!

Missile: I'm sorry, Miss Lynne... I was a bad doggie.

Lynne: You left two little bite marks on it. But I wasn't angry -- you just made me sad, because that badge means so much to me.

Sissel: So then... how? How did you end up with this ruffian?

Missile: Sissel, I've been letting you speak your mind for the last few minutes, but...

Lynne: When he saw that I was sad, Missile quietly came over, gave me back my badge, and started licking my hand.

Sissel: Oh...

Lynne: That's when I realized... even if he couldn't speak, he could still understand what I was feeling.

Missile: Miss Lynne...

Lynne: Since then, he hasn't once bitten into any of our stuff.

Missile: Because I decided then that I would never let anyone or anything make you or Miss Kamila sad, ever again!

Sissel: Heh. Even though that was the very first thing you did?

Missile: You didn't need to go there, you know!

Written by Shu Takumi.
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